

## Eucharistic Piety

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THE principal aim of the liturgical movement is that which Pope Pius X pointed out, namely to bring about the *active participation* of all the faithful in the sacred mysteries. This cannot be stressed too strongly.

Amongst the advocates of liturgical piety, there are those who seem to understand it merely as a method of prayer based on the liturgy and having certain advantages over other spiritual methods. The error here is somewhat naïve. Meditation on the themes of the liturgy is an excellent thing, but it is only a by-product of liturgical piety. To regard the official worship of the Church as no more than the material object of our half-hours of meditation, is certainly an inversion of values.

The liturgy, especially in its sacrificial and sacramental part, is action quite as much as meditation. Hence, even from a purely subjective point of view, it affords a religious experience quite as profound and important, nay, more profound and important than that of simple meditation. And in addition to this, sacrifice and sacraments have an objective, supernatural value which places them at once in an order absolutely different from and quite transcending that of private prayer.

It is an incontestable theological axiom, however, that these supernatural forces become efficacious largely in proportion to the intelligence which the faithful bring to the sacred mysteries and to active part which they take in them. This understanding and cooperation on their part may be more or less perfect. The chief effort of the liturgical movement should be directed toward the securing of a maximum of spiritual fruit by means of the liturgy made lucid and vital.

The Church's worship centers in the Eucharist—sacrifice and sacrament. Since the reforms of Pope Pius X, the faithful have a better understanding of the meaning and importance of the Eucharist. In former days they did not realize adequately what part the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass ought to have in their religious life; they had lost the habit of frequent sacramental Communion, which is the full participation in the Mass; good Christians of all degrees had sought to nourish their Eucharistic piety outside the liturgy.

Even in our day, does not the expression "Eucharistic piety" bring up to the minds of many the thought of non-liturgical devotions, those devotions which have grown up since the eleventh century about the Blessed Sacrament? They think of the Eucharist primarily as "Emanuel—God with us," Jesus present in the monstrance and in the tabernacle.

Our most popular Eucharistic devotions center about the white Host, Jesus hidden behind a morsel of bread. Beginning in the medieval days with a popular desire to see the Host, there came new Eucharistic devotions marked by a note of triumph, processions of the Blessed Sacrament, expositions and benedictions. Many a good soul has regarded these as the very apogee of Catholic worship, the supreme triumph of "the Eucharistic King." What greater glory can be given to Jesus here on earth than that He be raised aloft upon "a throne of light," in a monstrance of gleaming gold, amid the plaudits of the faithful who hail His passing or who bow in adoration to receive His blessing?

Alongside these moving spectacles, with their air of wonderment and exaltation, there appeared also devotions of a more intimate kind, more individual, more sentimental, and often touched with a note of melancholy. Such are visits to the Blessed Sacrament, nightly and perpetual adoration, and holy hours. In these devotions the faithful pour forth their soul in silent prayer "at the foot of the tabernacle." They come to seek counsel and comfort from "the Divine Friend" who "grants them audience" from the tabernacle. They make up for the neglect of those of their brethren who pay little heed to the invitation of "the Prisoner of love." For Jesus in the tabernacle is still unrecognized and abandoned. Who is there that has not heard this plaint? "At the far end of the dim cathedrals of our great

cities, before the flickering light of the sanctuary lamp, you may find a few faithful souls who keep solitary watch, while outside the streets are filled with the rushing masses of men, indifferent, ungrateful, bent solely upon pleasure and gain."

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These pious practices are excellent indeed. But it is to be regretted that the good people who cherish these sentiments (sometimes expressed in ways that are a bit unreal) do not always show an adequate understanding in regard to Communion and the Mass. Too often they think of Communion as a simple visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and of the Mass as that exercise of miraculous priestly power which brings about the Real Presence for the sake of Communion and exposition.

This is surely a faulty way of thinking, and no priestly and apostolic soul can approve of it. In order to have a fairly exact knowledge of anything, it is not enough to bring together some fragmentary notions on the subject, accidental ones perhaps, and imperfectly set together. One must possess at least a minimum of the essential points and must understand their relative place and importance. Otherwise the sum-total will be a false knowledge, not in accord with reality. Now, in the Eucharistic piety of many of the faithful, there is a lack of correct perspective and of a logical sense.

It is very important to observe the right order in the three aspects of Eucharistic piety which are symbolized by the altar, the communion-rail and the tabernacle. The Eucharist is primarily a sacrificial action. It derives its value and attains the chief purpose of its institution in an action, that action which we call the holy Mass. The Mass is a concrete and limited act, carried out according to rites fixed by Christ Himself or by the Church, an act which is finished when the rites are over. The altar, then, is the center of Eucharistic worship.

Holy Communion is the close and complete participation in the divine action which the Mass renews, namely the sacrifice of the Cross. Its value is diminished if it is regarded as distinct from and independent of the Mass. Its value lies in its being a part of the Mass, in that it enables us to participate to the fullest degree in the fruits of the sacrifice of Calvary.

The Mass and Communion are thus the essential acts of Eucharistic worship rightly understood. The various practices of devotion which give homage to the abiding Eucharistic Presence must be kept in secondary place. The Eucharist is reserved primarily for the needs of the faithful; not primarily that we may proceed to make the reserved Blessed Sacrament the veritable center of all our Eucha-

ristic worship, which it was never intended to be; but rather, we render due adoration of *latria* to the Blessed Sacrament which we reserve for the good of souls. (Dom L. Beauduin.)

The thought is well expressed in these words. The truths here stated are recognized instinctively by traditional piety, and reflection quite confirms them. They may easily be reduced to a simple and precise principle which every Catholic theologian must admit. Whatever is of divine institution has precedence over what is of ecclesiastical institution—and all the more over what is of purely private and human institution. Now, the Eucharist as instituted by Christ, is sacrifice, and sacramental communion as participation in the sacrifice. Adoration of the abiding Presence, not emphasized in the Latin Church until the eleventh century, and not emphasized in the Greek Church to the present day, is secondary. It is nevertheless a response of human gratitude to the gift of God. As such it is legitimate; but it must remain in second place. It becomes troublesome and harmful as soon as it tends to make us forget, or even slightly neglect that which is of divine institution.

Let us ever bear in mind this plain and simple principle, and it will hold us to the right spirit of the liturgy and of the Church. And incidentally, we shall do well to consider the legislation of the Church in regard to reservation of the Eucharist.

Suffice it to say here that the Roman Church in her legislation has always striven (though not always with success) to maintain the right order in regard to the altar, the communion-rail and the tabernacle. Expositions of the Blessed Sacrament are to be limited to extraordinary occasions and to be authorized only for grave and public cause. Regularly they are not permitted during Mass; whereas Masses and Communions should be as frequent as possible. Restrictions are placed upon the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, and according to the traditional principle that reservation is permitted only in those churches whose rectors have the cure of souls—evident proof that the primary purpose of reservation is the need of the sick and dying. (Dom L. Beauduin.)

Here we have a principle, luminous in its simplicity and in perfect accord with the data of history: the Eucharist is reserved for the sick, and being so reserved it must naturally be worshipped with due worship of *latria*. "We do not reserve in order to adore, but we adore in consequence of the fact that we reserve."

Let us be very careful lest our popular piety go astray. The efficacy of the Eucharist as sacrifice is bound up with the transitory action of the Mass; and as sacrament with the act of manducation, the *signum efficax*. The Eucharistic causality properly so-called does not extend beyond these. The comfort and consolation which the soul derives in prayer before the tabernacle is not to be regarded as part of the sacramental virtue of the Eucharist in the proper sense of the term.

We must ever maintain as the basis of our Eucharistic piety that for which the Eucharist was primarily intended. With that safeguarded, we may, of course, allow a certain latitude for the impulses of personal devotion.

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In seeking to account for certain deviations that have become evident in our popular piety, one is struck first of all by the fact that it seems to stand somewhat apart, to be not altogether in union and harmony with our doctrine, with the official liturgy of the Church, with the sound teaching of our great theologians, with the very catechetical information of the faithful themselves. It would seem that popular piety is not satisfied within official lines and sets out to find something more sentimental. May it not be that the fault is due somewhat to our preaching, despite the sound program traced out for us by the Catechism of the Council of Trent? But we need not try at this moment to locate all the responsibility.

For it may also well be that our professional theologians are in part responsible for the inversion of values which we find in popular Eucharistic piety. Reaction against heresies, especially against Protestantism, has caused our theologians to stress particularly the dogma of the Real Presence and all the apologetic part of the tract *de Eucharistia*. Quite in line with this insistence on the part of theologians, we find in popular piety the growth of devotions to the reserved Blessed Sacrament. They are a popular affirmation of that traditional faith which the theologians defend. These manifestations of piety directed toward points of apologetics have certainly done eminent service in maintaining the true faith among the masses of the people. If the dogma of the Real Presence is not safeguarded, faith in the sacrifice and sacrament will disappear. However, it is unfortunate that our

post-Tridentine theology has not done altogether well in regard to a theological explication of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Certain theories as to the "destruction" of Christ under the sacramental species seem to be responsible for the appearance, in popular piety, of thoughts which are more or less extravagant or unreal.

Moreover, it is possible that at the base of the disquieting fondness for novelty in devotion there may be something of that subtle illusion which we may call "the myth of inevitable progress." We know that there is, evidently, a certain historical evolution in matters of piety as in matters of dogma. And unfortunately, one is apt to imagine that evolution necessarily means progress, especially when it occurs within the bosom of the Church and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But, while it is true that in matters of dogma development does mean gain, at least, in the logical order, it is not true that all changes which have occurred throughout the centuries in matters of piety have always been in the direction of progress.

Not every addition is necessarily a gain. It is a serious mistake, though an easy and widespread one, to imagine that the ideal of the devout life is a devotion to details of pious sentiment and practice which are really not the essentials of Christian doctrine and duty. The abundance of religious life is measured in depth rather than in extension.

It is a plain fact of history that popular Eucharistic piety has had its periods of arrest and of retrogression quite as evidently as its periods of progress. One need simply recall the deplorable decline, lasting for several centuries, in the important matter of frequent Communion. These too, are the very centuries which saw the flourishing of non-liturgical devotions. Are these devotions evidences of progress and of a deeper comprehension of the gift of God? Are they not rather to be regarded as substitutes accorded by Divine Providence in times when Christians were held back by lack of comprehension or by spiritual apathy from the normal use of the Eucharist?

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To express briefly the characteristic difference between the liturgical conception of the Eucharist and that of independent piety, one might say that in the liturgy the Eucharist is primarily the sacrifice, with the sacrificial repast, of

the Body and Blood of Christ, whereas modern popular piety regards the Eucharist primarily as the local presence of the Person of the Lord. From this initial difference in conception there comes logically a wide divergence in mental attitudes and in acts.

The idea of the local presence of Jesus in the Eucharistic species and in communicants has fascinated certain minds to such extent that they have insensibly come to regard this as the most real and most perfect presence and union imaginable. It is a union "which stir the envy of the angels." It is a kind of divine counterpart of that mother-love according to which an infant is "dear enough to eat." The ancient Church was quite conscious of the fact of the Lord's local presence, but did not stop entirely at this consideration, which indeed is but the elementary one. To the ancient Church the Eucharist was above all an active symbol (*signum efficax*) and a promise.

After all there is a union more important than that solely of the sacramental presence, namely, the union of grace and love. It is of this latter union precisely that the Eucharist is the *signum efficax*. The most important thing is not the sign, the *sacramentum*, but rather the thing signified, the *res sacramenti*. How many of the faithful today have any understanding of what theologians call the "sacramentality" or the efficacious symbolism of the Eucharist? How many know that the physical body of Jesus, present beneath the species, is the *signum efficax* of His mystical body? How many know that the special grace of the Eucharist, that sacramental grace which it both symbolizes and produces, is supernatural charity, that love which unites us with Christ and unites us with each other, and so produces that union and inter-communication of vital forces which constitutes the mystical body of Christ, the end and purpose of the Eucharist?

The language of devotion has often and rightly celebrated the happiness of the soul into which God descends. "And with God, the whole of heaven, for all of heaven is there where God is." But the Postcommunion of the two great feasts of the Eucharist, Holy Thursday and Corpus Christi, are careful to remind us that these delights are but a foretaste of a more substantial joy. The Eucharist is the pledge of future glory. Full satisfaction, the final con-

summation, will render unnecessary the whole system of symbols and sacraments which are the basis of our religious life in its earthly phase. "But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." Are not these words useful here?

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How often it has been said that Jesus "descends upon our altars, dwells in our tabernacles, hides Himself beneath the appearance of bread, in order thus to unite Himself in the most intimate way possible with these whom He loves." With so much insistence upon Our Lord's humility and love as manifested in the Eucharist, there is danger that His Eucharistic life may be regarded as the prolongation of His life in Palestine to the loss of all thought of His heavenly life at the right hand of the Father. Let not His Eucharistic presence make us forget the triumphant life of the risen Christ, ascended bodily into heaven, now beyond the reach of suffering and of all contingencies, but still continuing His work of human redemption through His Holy Spirit and His Church. What meaning, we may ask, is there in the popular piety of many of the faithful, in the phrase: "Thou who sitest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us"? What force in their religious life has the thought that we have an Advocate with the Father, a High-Priest who has penetrated for us within the holy of holies, "always living to make intercession for us"? How different is their attitude from that of St. Stephen, who in the crisis of his martyrdom saw the heavens open "and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." And St. Gregory adds the comment: "To stand is the posture of fighting or helping."

If one regards principally in the Eucharist the infinitely adorable presence of Jesus, the most appropriate attitude is that of adoration. Hence the importance which modern devotion attaches to visits, expositions and processions. The opposition here to the attitude of ancient piety is best seen in the case of the Mass celebrated before the exposed Blessed Sacrament. Modern piety desires exposition and adoration even during the celebration of the sacred mysteries; and fails to realize that at such time the all-important thing is to unite with one's brethren, with the priest, and with Christ Himself in the ritual act of sacrifice, the supreme expression of Christian adoration and religion. Many



of the faithful no longer understand what an immense difference there is between the Mass—alas, too often celebrated in haste—and exposition however solemn. If they did indeed “realize” the meaning of the Mass, they would not isolate themselves in meditation upon “the sacrament of love;” rather they would enter actively into the united action of the sacrifice, at once the commemoration and the fruitful application of the sacrifice of Calvary, the supreme manifestation of Christ’s love for mankind.

If one considers in the Eucharist principally the presence of the hidden God, Communion is principally God’s visit to the soul of the recipient. It is the visit of the Master to the servant, of the Physician to one who is ill, of Friend to friend. “Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum.” The home of the heart must be prepared to receive “the Divine Guest.” Unworthy Communion is the “receiving of Jesus into an abode of Satan.” The imagery is correct enough, but Communion is more than a visit!

It is true indeed that the idea of manducation, of spiritual nourishment, has not been lost. The faithful know that the Eucharist is the bread of the soul, the daily nourishment of our languishing life. Nevertheless, by reason of their sensibility to the presence of the Lord, this thought loses something of its force and has less influence in fixing their mental attitude. To many it never occurs to thank the heavenly Father “for His gifts,” as the Postcommunions do again and again. They address their thanks to the Gift itself, that is, to Jesus personally present within them.

Of course the ancient Christians loved the presence of Jesus in the soul of the communicant, but that presence was to them His body and blood, their spiritual food and drink, for which they gave due thanks to the Father. Altogether, their way of thinking was more rich than ours and more in accord with the nature of the Eucharist. They knew just as we do that Christ is present whole and entire in the Eucharist. But they knew also how to distinguish between that which the Eucharist is *vi sacramenti*, and that which is present under the species only *vi realis concomitantiae*, as the scholastics say.

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If one regards Communion merely as a visit, or simply as spiritual food, one loses sight of its essential dependence on

the Mass. And so one comes to think that Communion may just as well be received outside of Mass or at any time during the course of the Mass. The Mass is thought of as merely the means by which the Real Presence is produced, the liturgical act in which Jesus voluntarily takes up His abode beneath the species. Here is the capital defect in our modern popular conception of Communion. The faithful no longer understand its relation to the sacrifice. And besides that, the idea of the Eucharistic sacrifice no longer holds any notable place in their devotional life.

Will it be said that the idea of sacrifice is too subtle to be popular? Then how explain its choice by Christ Himself? And how explain that sacrifice is found even among the most primitive peoples, wherever there is any idea of God and of religion? On the contrary, it should precisely be our joy to know that in the sacrifice of the Mass we are able to give perfect expression to that which humanity has always striven to utter in every age and in every clime.

Accordingly as we allow the idea of sacrifice to lapse into oblivion, or to lose its force in any degree, we tend in the direction of the Protestant mind. It has often been said that it is the tabernacle that distinguishes our Catholic churches from the "cold and empty" churches of the Protestants. This observation is not altogether correct. For many centuries Catholic churches were without tabernacles, and some of them are to this day. The one thing without which the Catholic church is inconceivable is the altar. Protestantism did away with the altar; and put in its place only a table, the table of the Lord's Supper.

Let us be warned against even the appearance of an inversion of values. The precious value of Communion lies in its relation to the sacrifice of the Mass. It is not simply a repast, but a sacrificial repast, the partaking of the Victim. Too often have our professional theologians neglected this aspect of the sacramental sign. The Eucharistic *signum* is not simply bread and wine, but bread and wine offered as the objects of a sacrificial rite, and distributed in a sacrificial repast. The effect which is both signified and produced is not simply that of nourishment, but rather it is that very special virtue which results from the partaking of the Victim.

To receive the Victim is to communicate in the sacrifice, that is, to manifestly participate in the priest's action and to be assured of the fulness of its fruit.

The partaking of the Victim is a gesture so self-evident in its meaning that the liturgy seems to consider any lengthy explanation of it to be unnecessary. A study of the Post-communions will help us to sound the depths of that *mysterium* of which they continually speak, and in which they bid us to participate. "Lord, may our partaking in thy sacrament quicken us . . . give us a share in the salutary mystery . . . make us participate in it."

To partake of the Victim is also to be assured of the fruits of the sacrifice. The Council of Trent expresses the wish "that during every Mass the faithful there present communicate, not only spiritually, but sacramentally also by the reception of the Eucharist in order that the richer fruit of this most holy sacrifice may come to them." St. Thomas says "this sacrament benefits those who receive it, both sacramentally and sacrificially, for it is offered for all who receive it." In support of this statement he cites the words of the Canon, "that as many of us as by participation at this altar shall receive the most sacred Body and Blood of thy Son may be filled with every heavenly grace and blessing." And in another and still more intense formula, the Church prays, "May the constant protection of the sacrifice we have received fail us not, Lord. . . ." How could any words express more clearly the identity of the sacrificial and the sacramental fruits of the Eucharist, considering that the sacrifice and the sacrament contribute in different ways in producing them. This point merits further attention on the part of theological science.

Let the faithful once cease to linger so exclusively upon the thought of the Real Presence, let them learn once more to know the sacrificial character of their Eucharistic food and the special grace of the Eucharist, the *sacramentum unitatis*, and they will no longer approach the altar timidly, and retire each to his own private converse with the Lord. And we priests will no longer regard our Mass as an act of private devotion, despite the strong insistence of the Council of Trent, declaring that even those Masses in which the faithful do not communicate are not forbidden nor regarded as private. . . .

It is true that present defects in right understanding find some excuse in the present status of the liturgy itself. But it must not be forgotten that reforms in this domain are not effected until a necessary preparation has been made among the faithful. Hence our efforts for the moment should be directed toward a better understanding of that which is at hand.

## A Right Attitude Toward the Eucharist

JOSEPH KRAMP, S.J.

*The Church and her liturgy tenaciously maintain the original sequence regarding the importance of the various phases of the Eucharist: Sacrifice, Sacrament, Presence.  
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**W**E all believe in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist. We all believe that He is present as God and as Man, with soul and body, truly, really, and substantially, these words being taken in the meaning and sense which Catholic tradition and the Church's teaching apply to them. (We emphasize this, because the great reformers also speak in part of a true, real, and substantial presence.) We all believe that Christ as God and as Man is deserving of our adoration—as Man on account of the mysterious union of the divine and human natures in Him, which we call hypostatic. We all believe that we receive this very Christ in Communion as the food of our souls or, as we also say, sacramentally. We all believe that the Mass is a sacrifice; a sacrifice which at the same time is a mysterious making present of the great Sacrifice of Redemption on Calvary.

We all believe in the vivifying presence of Christ in His Church, which has been called His mystical body; we believe it, even though the meaning of this phrase or this presence frequently appears to us dark and veiled. We believe in the one Church as the community of all the faithful in Christ; we believe in this community, even though its concrete form or its visibility rarely touch our conscious-

ness: yes, even when the activity of this religious community threatens to become bothersome to or even to encroach upon our personal devotions at an act of public worship, for example the Mass. We all believe in the intercessory power of this ecclesiastical community for ourselves and our interests. We put this faith into practice when we gain indulgences for ourselves or for the Poor Souls, when we desire and receive sacramental benediction, as, for instance, on First Fridays. Or do we perhaps here separate Church from ecclesiastical community? Or do we even strive after other things?

Yes, what is the actual condition of our faith? Is it really an acceptance of divine truths and divine life on the basis of divine testimony? Or do we make a selection from among the various tenets of our faith? In the theoretic analysis, certainly not; but how about their practical application? Are we able to say of ourselves that we live by faith, as St. Paul expects of his Christians?

We all believe and all hold the truths that the Church as the protectress of divine revelation proposes for our belief. We all believe the same doctrines concerning the Eucharist, or as it was formerly called (already with a certain leaning to one side) the Sacrament of the Altar.

And yet the attitudes toward the Eucharist are very different, if we consider the practical life of the Christian, and the life of the Church's worship. I should like to trace the two great types, to which a third is to be added which attempts a union of the two, which is theoretically as well as practically impossible.

The first type is that of Eucharistic adoration. In our former catechisms it seems to have found some support. For in the treatment of the Eucharist, there was a question first of the presence of Christ to which adoration must be paid, then of Communion, and finally of Sacrifice. It was the purely external and historical sequence of the Tridentine decrees concerning the Eucharist. Today we are getting back to the sequence that represents the order of true importance: Sacrifice, Communion, Presence.

For people of this kind, among whom most of the older generation are to be numbered, the adorable Presence of Christ is the dominant idea. The faithful visit the Lord in church and kneel before the tabernacle to adore Him, to pay

Him homage, to implore His aid, and to make reparation for their own sins and those of others. Few consider the Mass as a Sacrifice or know how to make use of the Mass texts; the majority see in the Mass only the opportunity of renewing the presence of Christ among men, so that they may greet Him respectfully and receive Him into their souls. Hence there is such love for Mass with Exposition, for then there is solemnity and life, then the heart can pour itself out in adoration! Hence such a longing for Eucharistic devotions before the exposed Sacrament and for sacramental benediction. These are often preferred—if not theoretically then at least in practice—to a Low Mass or even a High Mass. Certainly, the faithful remember from sermons and instructions that the value of the Mass is infinite, that it excels all else; but this value, at least in the general consciousness, lies rather in the fact as such of the Mass and its effects, than in the practical utilization of psychological participation. That is equivalent to saying the element of utility for one's self and for others surpasses that of worship, for worship is thought to have created its forms of expression in terms of Eucharistic adoration.

Hence such people cannot understand why the Church allows exposition and benediction only in a set form and with the monstrance only on fixed and clearly indicated days, why she has laid down such stringent rules regarding the celebration of Mass at an altar of exposition or during exposition in general, why she does not favor the distribution of Communion at an altar of exposition and especially not at a Mass *coram exposito*. For them, Communion follows the same lines as adoration and worship. They receive the divine Guest, and in their preparation and thanksgiving stretch the contrasts to the farthest possible limits: God comes to man, the Creator to the sinful creature, etc. No connection between the Mass and Communion is recognized other than that the Mass affords the opportunity to communicate. But one can communicate at all times; it is possible even by an act of the soul, for adoration excels everything and unites everything into one. It is remarkable that the popular opinion obtains that the recitation of the Rosary during a Mass has more value than outside of Mass; while Communion is rather received before Mass than during it. To such persons the Church's rules in the Ritual seem in-

explicable: "In the Mass, however" (the rite of Communion outside of Mass was treated just before), "the faithful are to communicate immediately after the celebrating priest, although occasionally Communion for a reasonable cause may take place before or after a low Mass; for the Postcommunion prayers relate not only to the priest, but also to the other communicants." And again: "If it should happen that the one or the other communicates just before or after Mass, then. . . ." From this it appears clearly that Communion before or after Mass is an exception. But for the above class of faithful it is the usual thing.

This group, it must be admitted, considers the doctrine of the fellowship of all the faithful a revealed truth of faith, but excludes this same doctrine from its Eucharistic life. Many look upon the community idea as burdensome and annoying, because it prevents the undisturbed following of one's purely personal impulses to adoration. Hence the quiet corners of the church are sought or some other accustomed place associated with one's own devotions. These Christians seek no contact with the celebrating priest, neither interior nor exterior; they do not know how to effect it. Much less do they seek contact with the attending community; some knowledge of it may exist, theoretically its value is affirmed, but it is not something vital to them.

Their attitude towards Christ is also definitely set. These faithful pay Him homage as God or as God-Man, and as such He is also received by them in holy Communion. Christ's Person occupies the front rank, and all Eucharistic life centers around Him and in Him finds its goal. Really, the reasoning process appears extremely simple: Christ is God and is present as God in the Eucharist, and consequently I pay God all the homage which I show Christ. The idea of Christ as the Mediator between God and us is not put into practice. Has it not seen its fulfillment in the past, in the life and death of Christ, in His Redemption? In the present-day Catholic consciousness Christ does not stand on our side as it were, facing God (as our Mediator): He stands on the side of God opposite to us (and the mediators of our prayer-life are the Saints). Many look upon it as an unintelligible peculiarity, not to say a religious anachronism, that the Church does not wish to celebrate the Office at an altar where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.

What is more, the desire is unmistakable that the entire Breviary should be addressed more to Christ and become an act of homage to the Eucharist—which is entirely contrary to the general tradition of the Church, whose prayers now always are addressed to God as our Lord and Father and “through Christ our Lord” (as Mediator).

It is evident that there is question here of a consistent and logically developed viewpoint, of a detailed psychological attitude towards the Eucharist. We do not mean to say, however, that this attitude is found in all its rigor in every Christian of this type. We would not deny that such an attitude can lead to sanctity, for without a doubt many persons have become holy in this manner. But is it the Church’s way, is it the viewpoint which the Church herself observes and recommends to the faithful concerning her public worship, her prayer-life, her relation to the Eucharist?

The Church certainly takes a different attitude in her liturgy and by her clear and repeated exhortations she also recommends to her children a high regard of and practical participation in her liturgy.

Some of the faithful recognize this plainly and try to find a central position. They endeavor to retain the attitude we have described as their basic position and to unite with it whatever in the liturgical life has value in the light of that attitude. With them the Eucharistic liturgy is but a new aspect of the life of prayer and worship, which one attends to once a month, in the same way as any saint’s feast or a Sacred Heart Friday is observed. But this is neither theoretically nor practically very workable, and as with many it only results in their again relinquishing the so-called liturgical attitude, not to speak of attacking it under all possible pretexts. The word of the Lord concerning new wine in old bottles can well be applied here.

The Church has in her liturgy a most logical and detailed conception and attitude, in which only at set periods account is taken of the popular Eucharistic piety of the faithful but without ever compromising her basic position in the least.

A sentence of St. Paul’s is most forceful: “There is one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus: who gave himself a redemption for all, a testimony in



due times. Whereunto I am appointed a preacher and an apostle." The emphasis here lies on the "man Christ," who as Mediator and Man is on our side, stands with us facing God in all worship and prayer. Prayer is addressed to God as our Lord and Father, and reaches Him "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The idea of the mystical body of Christ is vital. Christ does not live only as a person, but also as the Church, as a unitary organism. He himself has styled it the vine, of which we are the branches, while St. Paul called it the body of which Christ is the Head and we the members. As such Christ lives in the Eucharist, and so there is no more appropriate expression for our union with Him and with one another than the communion of the Eucharist. Thus Communion is the way and life in Christ to the Father; it is food and drink for our organic supernatural life as children of God; in short, it is the bond of union with God, with Christ, with all members; it is common fellowship in origin, essence, and effect. It was first established through the Sacrifice of Calvary, anticipated as a common Eucharistic action in the sacrifice of the Last Supper; it arises out of the Sacrifice as the oblation of the man Christ to His heavenly Father for us; today it still proceeds from the altar, out of the sacrifice of the Eucharist as the offering of the same Christ, but now together with our offering with and in Christ. It is the Sacrament of the Altar; hence it always derives from the altar of the Sacrifice, and coming to us and received by us in the setting of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Everything is common fellowship of action here.

Communion before Mass taken entirely by itself appears—even if not considered as such theoretically—as worship of self rather than worship of God; the first care is for the *ego* (in the Communion separated from the Sacrifice), and then only for God (in the Mass, which is rather attended as a thanksgiving after Communion than actively participated in). A Mass before the exposed Sacrament appears as a petition for a Presence that is already a reality before the eyes of all, and as worship paid to Christ rather than worship given to God through Christ in His Church. Such precedence of adoration paid to the Eucharistic Christ seems like an inversion of the following relation: Sacrifice, Communion, Adoration.

Considered in this light, all the commands, prohibitions, and tolerations of the Church regarding the Eucharistic life find their true meaning. The frequent, even daily, reception of Communion in its proper setting can in nowise lead to a dulling of the religious life, because it is entwined in an active unity, that reflects the highest and profoundest life in God and for God. To the former type of Christians, this attitude will perhaps appear as a disregard for the Person of Christ, above all for His divinity, but in reality it is otherwise. The liturgy but approaches Christ from another angle and another viewpoint, and does not stop at His person. It desires to make the following word of St. Paul a reality: "For all is yours; and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's," and that other word, according to which Christ together with all the homage paid to Himself lives "to the glory of God the Father." For He is not the end and goal of our worship, but with us He honors the Father.

It is because our fellowship, our union with Christ and with one another, is realized, so strikingly in this way, that there is such a strong impulse to common worship, to participation in the ecclesiastical-liturgical form of prayer. It then becomes impossible to do anything else than pray the Mass, than co-offer in the Mass, and receive the Sacrament of Unity during the Mass. One will then gradually find oneself enveloped in a distinct religious atmosphere, in which the cares of self and one's own concerns fit themselves into the cares and the life of the community, of the Church. The soul is borne along in Christ, and gratitude, confidence, and praise fill it more than a shy fear of the tremendous mystery. If the choice between Mass and Communion should ever become imperative such a person would rather be deprived of Communion than of Mass in accordance with the thought once expressed as follows by St. Ignatius of Loyola: "If I am solicitous about God, He will surely take care of me." Besides, the Mass as Sacrifice presents as many realities of the religious life as the first type of Christians is wont to ascribe to Communion: homage, adoration of God, incorporation in Christ. The Church's true attitude is not only: unto Christ!, but rather: unto an all-embracing fellowship in Christ, and in and with Christ unto God!

The liturgy is the service of the Church considered as the fellowship of the members of Christ; and we have the

liturgy precisely because this fellowship is an actuality. The liturgy arose as worship out of the community-idea, and can only be understood and lived in that light. All the instructions about the liturgy will bear little fruit, unless they arise out of the depth and breadth of this view of Christ and the Church. Liturgical action will ever be devoid of life unless it springs forth as a living branch from this life in Christ and His Church. Is the scant understanding we have of the community-idea the cause of the absence of a liturgical sense among us? Or do we at times dissect, by means of a search for meaning and purpose and concept, things that must simply be lived in faith?

In the history of the Roman liturgy the position of the Church is clearly defined: she did not wish to make of her liturgy a mere confession of faith. But we too often seek such confession where worship and life should be uppermost. The Church and her liturgy tenaciously maintain the original sequence regarding the importance of the various phases of the Eucharist: sacrifice, sacrament, presence. The Sacrament must fit into and subordinate itself to the Sacrifice; and to the presence of Christ the homage is paid for which Sacrifice and Sacrament in the framework of the Divine Office leave room. Christ also in the Eucharist is not an end in Himself; there too He performs His office as the Head of His Church, as our Mediator in our cultural life, and as Dispenser of grace in the service of our souls. "The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister."

## Christ in the Eucharist

SISTER FRANCES RITA

*The main ideas of the two preceding papers are restated in these brief paragraphs taken from a paper published in Orate Fratres.*

THE Church in her liturgy has kept the right emphasis in regard to the Eucharist; but at times extra-liturgical devotions have resulted in loss, to a greater or less degree, of appreciation of the spirit of the liturgy. In the early centuries Eucharistic devotion was liturgical, or at least sub-

ordinate to the liturgy; it consisted of sacrifice-oblation, the offering of the faithful to God the Father, and sacramental communion, the sacrifice-banquet, the return Gift of the Father to the faithful. When the Sacrament was reserved, it was for the sick, not for visits of adoration. About the year 1000, the Christian consciousness became more fully aware of the meaning of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Adoration practices were multiplied; and the tabernacle where the adorable Person of the Savior dwelt received more attention. Later when Protestantism denied the real presence, the faithful increased their manifestations of outward homage. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, even during Mass, became frequent. An overstressing of the adoration of the Redeemer in the Eucharist to the neglect of devotion to the Blessed Trinity disturbed the right order; the sacrifice-aspect, with sacramental communion, was neglected; private Eucharistic devotions of adoration and reparation tended to replace liturgical prayer; the Mass, the corporate act of homage of the mystical body of Christ, came to be regarded as a function of the priest by which the real presence was effected, and holy Communion as a mere visit of Jesus. Here was lack of correct perspective. Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament is not to take the place of devotion to the Trinity. He who is in the tabernacle is God's Gift to us, and it is by means of that Gift that we are to be united ever more closely to the Trinity. Very significant is the legislation of the Church in regard to the Eucharist. Holy Mass is of obligation weekly. Holy Communion yearly; other Eucharistic practices are left to the individual's private devotion.

Conformity with the mind of the Church, which is in perfect accord with the mind of Christ and with the Eucharistic practice of the early Church, is the object of the modern liturgical movement begun by Pope Pius X. Its success will make the altar rather than the tabernacle the center of prayer life; it will give the proper emphasis to Mass, holy Communion, and adoration; it will lead the faithful to offer thanks to the Heavenly Father for His Gift to them, to pray with Mother Church her Postcommunion prayers, "that we may be filled with the everlasting enjoyment of Thy divinity which is prefigured by the temporal reception of Thy Body and Blood." . . .